

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5771

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11328

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: GENERAL VANG PAO AND MEO RESETTLEMENT

1. THE QUESTION OF GENERAL VANG PAO'S DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND AND THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF MEO REFUGEES WAS RAISED TODAY WITH THE AMBASSADOR BY UNDER SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PHAEN.

2. VAN PAO'S DEPARTURE. PHAEN SAID THE RTG WOULD LIKE VAN PAO TO LEAVE FOR THE U.S. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IT WAS THE VIEW OF THE RTG THAT HIS PRESENCE IN THAILAND WOULD ATTRACT MORE MEO REFUGEES AND WOULD CONTINUE TO CAUSE MISUNDERSTANDING WITH THE PGNU. PHAEN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT ABOUT 200 MEO WOULD GO WITH VANG PAO. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE U.S. WAS PERFECTLY PREPARED TO ISSUE VISAS TO VANG PAO AND HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY. NO APPLICATION FOR A VISA HAD YET BEEN MADE. THE FIGURE OF 200 MEO WAS ONE HA HAD SEEN IN THE PAPERS BUT HE HAD NO IDEA WHO THEY MIGHT BE. PHAEN AGREED THAT THE QUESTION OF THE 200 COULD BE SET ASIDE.

3. RETURN TO LAOS. PHAEN SAID THE RTG WANTED THE MEO
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TO RTURN TO LAOS AND WAS SEEKING GUARANTEES THAT THEY

WOULD NOT BE HARMED. HE MUSED THAT SOME INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE FROM THE UN OR THE RED CROSS MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT ANYTHING WHICH GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF FORCING THE MEO TO RETURN WOULD BE REGRETTABLE AND MIGHT WELL BE VIEWED CRITICALLY IN THE U.S. PHAEN SAID THAT THAILAND HAD ALWAYS BEEN WILLING TO GRANT ASYLUM TO REFUGEES BUT THAT THE MEO DILEMMA WAS PERPLEXING. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT IF THE MEO FOUND THE SITUATION LAOS NOT TO THEIR LIKING THEY WOULD SEEP RIGHT BACK.

4. RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. PHAEN NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME WORKING LEVEL TALKS AT UDORN BETWEEN THAI AND U.S. OFFICIALS ABOUT THE MEO AND THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE U.S. WAS WILLING TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO RESETTLE THE MEO. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THE U.S. WAS WILLING TO PROVIDE SOME HELP AND THAT IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH THE APPROPRIATE THAI OFFICIALS TO WORK OUT SOME KIND OF JOINT PLAN. PHAEN AGREED.

5. LOCATION OF RESETTLEMENT. THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAD HEARD OF ONE PLAN TO RESETTLE THE MEO NEAR THE LAO FRONTIER AS A "BUFFER". HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THIS MIGHT WELL RESULT IN ATTRACTING MORE MEO FROM LAOS AND RISKED BEING THE CAUSE OF FRONTIER INCIDENTS. THIS WAS A THAI PROBLEM BUT GIVEN THE MEO/CIA RELATIONSHIP, THE U.S. WOULD SURELY BE ACCUSED OF PLAYING A ROLE IN ANY INCIDENTS OF THIS KIND. PHAEN AGREED AND STATED THAT IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE VIEW THE MEO SHOULD BE "TEMPORARILY" RESETTLED IN THE NORTHWEST.

6. COMMENT: WE WILL BE REPORTING SEPARATELY ON VANG PAO'S PLANS FOR DEPARTURE.
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